Tsuru Aoki and Anna May Wong: Clothing, Life and Death, and The Ambivalence toward the Haunting Past

Qiurui Guo [a*]
[a] Department of East Asian Studies, University of Alberta

0009-0000-5035-7727

ABSTRACT: This research employs Anna Anlin Cheng's concept of Ornamentalism to examine the costumes in three Hollywood films featuring Asian actresses: Tsuru Aoki's The Wrath of the Gods and The Dragon Painter, as well as Anna May Wong's Daughter of the Dragon. While Tsuru Aoki is often overshadowed by her association with Sessue Hayakawa, her contributions as an esteemed actress in early cinema deserve more focused examination. Similarly, Anna May Wong's Daughter of the Dragon has not received the scholarly attention it warrants. This research aims to bridge these gaps by analyzing the culturally specific costumes that shape the star images of Aoki and Wong, both on and off the screen. Additionally, the study explores how costumes interact with culturally specific visual elements, narrative structures, and the female body to construct and deconstruct Asian racial identities within these films. By considering the transnational reception of these films and the sensory and material culture surrounding their production, this research reveals the ongoing dialogues and interdependencies among American and Asian women during the early 20th century as they navigated and shaped their racial and gender identities.

KEYWORDS: Asiatic femininity, Hollywood, Feminist Theory, Cinema, postcolonial discourses, Asian American, Spectatorship, Material Culture

https://doi.org/10.25071/2817-5344/103
* Corresponding Author - Email Address: qiurui1@ualberta.ca
Received 21 Sep. 2024; Received in revised form 13 Feb. 2025; Accepted 10 Apr. 2025

This research employs Anna Anlin Cheng's *Ornamentalism* to investigate the costumes in Tsuru Aoki's *The Wrath of the Gods* and *The Dragon Painter* and Anna May Wong's *Daughter of the Dragon,* exploring them as contested and enduring sites of race-making.[1,2,3,4] The paper aims to elucidate how costumes interact with other culturally specific visual elements, narrative structures, and the female body to (de)construct Asian racial identities throughout these films. These intricacies were often overlooked within static analytical paradigms such as orientalism, commodification, and discussions on film authorship. The research will harmonize Cheng's Ornamentalism with Rey Chow's ethnic spectatorship and feminist film historiography advocated by Catherine Russell.[5,6] The former takes films' transnational reception into account, while the latter explores the sensory and material modern culture within which films were produced, distributed and experienced. It intends to reveal the ongoing dialogues and interdependencies among American and Asian women of that era, as they sought to shape their racial and gender identities.

Tsuru Aoki is often remembered as Sessue Hayakawa's wife, both on and off-screen. In Daisuke Miyao's *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom,* Aoki's roles in films like *The Wrath of the Gods* and *The Dragon Painter* were primarily studied to support analysis of Hayakawa's screen image and film reception.[7] However, Aoki was an esteemed star actress in her own right, entering motion pictures before Hayakawa, a facet often overlooked in scholarly discourse. Sara Ross, article in 2005 is the first journal article on Tsuru Aoki.[8] It discusses how Tsuru Aoki's star image represents a shift in feminine values, serving as an aspirational example for American women without posing any threats. In a more recent article by Guth in 2021, Aoki's private life and public image are studied to support the analysis of her character Umeko in *The Dragon Painter* and its relation to an identically titled novel and Japanism.[9]

Contrary to Tsuru Aoki, Anna May Wong has garnered substantial scholarly attention, according to the Oxford Bibliographies, there have been 42 scholarly publications on Wong

from 1976 to 2017, encompassing various facets of her life.[10] These include biographies, her experiences bridging China and America, her film and stage career, transnational cultural studies, and discussions on race, gender, beauty, and orientalism. Despite this, Wong's film, *Daughter of the Dragon,* has been underexplored due to its perceived status as lowbrow cultural production.[11] This point is further reflected in Chow's 2020 biographical article of Wong's life and career in Early Hollywood. Though offering a detailed overview of Wong's public persona, private life, and films, Chow overlooked *Daughter of the Dragon*, which received a potent publicity campaign from the major production studio in Hollywood—Paramount Pictures.

Hodges' 2012 biography stands as an early account of Anna May Wong's life from her vibrant, eventful years to the quieter times when she continued to strive for new breakthroughs.[12] In his analysis, Hodges delves deeply into Wong's personal correspondence and international press coverage, dedicating a significant portion of the book to her seven-year transatlantic career. The fourth chapter, in particular, explores the interplay between film narrative, visuality, and transnational reception, with a focus on Wong's cinematic image in works such as *Shanghai Express*, in which she starred alongside Marlene Dietrich, and *Daughter of the Dragon*, where she performed opposite Sessue Hayakawa.[13] In contrast, Katie Gee Salisbury's recent biography provides an even more comprehensive account of Wong's life, tracing her journey from her early experiences in her family's laundry business to her rise to stardom in films like *The Thief of Bagdad*.[14] Salisbury's work emphasizes Wong's resilience and her profound influence in challenging racial stereotypes, providing both personal and professional insights that are valuable for this research. Moreover, Sean Metzger's article examines Wong's representation in late-1930s American cinema, particularly her positive portrayal of Chinese clothing, which contributed to reshaping cultural perceptions of China in the United States.[15] Although not directly connected to the films we are researching, Metzger's analysis offers valuable theoretical support for understanding Wong's clothing choices in *Daughter of the Dragon*.

This research uses clothing as a connecting thread between the star images and lives of two Asian female stars in Hollywood, Tsuru Aoki and Anna May Wong, within the context of three films: *The Wrath of The Gods*, *The Dragon Painter* and *Daughter of the Dragon.* In these films, the characters are all attired in culturally specific costumes and their lives are influenced by the enduring traditions of their ethnic origins. They also serve as compelling sites for discussing evolving cultural and political discourses in the United States, Japan, and China, which continually shape the cinematic and personal identities of Asian women.

The Wrath of the Gods: The Rescued Kimono as an Emblem of Purified Japanese Taste

In Miyao's examination of *The Wrath of the Gods,* the kimonos worn by Yamaki (played by Hayakawa) and Toya-san (portrayed by Aoki) are portrayed as symbolic representations of Japan, conveying a static, exotic, and picturesque essence. While Miyao's analysis offers valuable insights, its orientalist framework occasionally overlooks nuanced subtleties inherent in visual presentations.

Anna Anlin Cheng's Ornamentalism challenges the isolating tendency of orientalist interpretations, which detach objects from the female body, reducing them to object/subject or consumer/consumed dichotomies. Cheng advocates for a more dynamic approach—exploring the formation of Asian female personhood through the interface of ontology and objectness.[16]

Similarly, Rey Chow's adeptly uncovers the shortcomings of Orientalism and post-colonialism, which often tend to mythologize and essentialize Eastern history, thereby erasing its inherent subjectivity. By focusing on film, Chow underscores the significance of this medium as a dynamic space where ethnic identities continuously negotiate and transform. She urges a nuanced understanding of cultural logic within film imagery, highlighting the pivotal role of ethnic spectatorship in decoding these intricate dynamics.[17]

Examining Toya-san's kimono through an ornamentalist lens reveals a significant evolution. Initially symbolizing a restrictive form of Buddhism limiting a woman's pursuit of love, the kimono transforms into refined artistry, echoing moral and spiritual qualities akin to Christianity. This transformation could be further reinforced by Chow's concept of ethnic spectators from both the United States and Japan.

The Wrath of the Gods, based on the dramatic eruption of the Sakura-jima volcano in 1914, narrates a story of the cursed family with Toya-san. As the film unfolds, Toya-san displays deep inner turmoil and sorrow, marked by her love relation with Tom Wilson, because the prophet Takeo claimed that she was cursed by Buddha as a surrogate sacrifice for her brother's transgressions. This curse decrees the extinction of their race should anyone marry Toya-san. Despite feeling unjustly treated by the gods and wholly innocent in the incident, Toya-san finds herself bearing the burden of this ancient religious condemnation, caught between her affection for Tom Wilson (Frank Borzage), a European-American sailor shipwrecked near their isolated shack, and her duty to protect her race.

As the sole identifiable woman depicted wearing a kimono in the narrative, the attire serves as a constant reminder of her identity and the predestined fate of a Japanese woman. Metzger highlights that clothing fabric not only expresses social relations but also entails inhabiting a particular habitus and necessitates specific movement practices aligned with cultural norms.[18] The kimono, with its multiple layers and thick belt, imposes constraints on movement, requiring compliance with arbitrary commands of the ancient spirit. The kimono Toya-san wears not only symbolizes societal expectations but also visibly regulates her body, restricting her movements and subjecting her to societal scrutiny. After Prophet Takeo warned the fisherman at the seaside to stay away from Toya-san because she was a woman cursed by the Buddha, Toya-san left the shore under the fisherman's gaze. She sobbed, wiping her tears with a handkerchief in her right hand, while taking small, unsteady steps as she staggered away. Toya-san's kimono seemed to wrap around her like the

Buddha's curse, forcing her to accept this arbitrary fate and endure the suffering alone.

This cultural and sartorial disciplining of the body did not improve after Toya-san was saved by Tom Wilson. Instead, it gradually intensified as the gaze shifted from Japanese patriarchy to that of European men. In the latter part of the film, the kimono replaces Toya-san's body and subjectivity. Hanoke, the Jinrickisha driver, discovered Toya-san's forbidden love with Tom and later reported it to the local community. This revelation ultimately led to a riot when the two married in the local church. Despite initially displaying dissent toward the Buddha gods before meeting Tom, her affection for him prompts a state of worry, timidity, and fear—a regression to her earlier demeanor upon just hearing of the curse. As the narrative progresses toward their Christian marriage, instead of embracing hope and love, Toya-san becomes engulfed by the fear of imminent condemnation from her people and the Buddha gods. Contrary to the anticipated regaining of her subjectivity through Christianity, Tom's dominance becomes evident as he dictates the changes in the latter part of the story and assumes the role of the savior. Toya-san seems to be valuable only when conforming to the preassigned role of Japanese culture in Tom's perspective—namely, her weak, submissive appearance, devoid of decision-making ability. Toya's gradual loss of female autonomy accentuates the kimono's significance, which becomes a surrogate for her personhood, cherished by the Euro-American savior.

At the end of the film, Toya-san is the only Japanese rescued by the merchant man. As she boards the boat, Toya-san is portrayed with a refined hairstyle and a well-attired kimono, a stark contrast to her earlier disheveled appearance with untidy hair and a soiled kimono during the escape from the volcanic eruption. This transformation signifies the culmination of the rescue of Japanese culture. Toya-san the character, aligning with Cheng's notion of subject as object, in which her subjectivity is either merged or functions solely through the objectification represented by the kimono. In this context, it's not Toya who finds salvation, but rather the kimono—an emblem symbolizing ancient and sophisticated

Japanese culture, stripped of superstition and sanctified by Christianity. More importantly, while the initial scenes showcase all the leading male actors adorned in kimonos, Aoki's character, Toya-san, is notably absent, further reducing her role to a mere representation of assimilable Japanese culture. Her image as an actress is erased, leaving only the character in the film. Both Aoki's agency as an actress and Toya-san's subjectivity as a character are suppressed.

The historical parallel between the film and Japan's forced opening to the West in 1853, spearheaded by Commodore Matthew Perry's U.S. naval squadron, underscores the influx of Japanese culture, art, and style into America. Japanese Taste disseminated through various channels—ranging from intellectuals appointed by the Japanese government to European fascination with "Japonisme", art exhibitions, magazines, and Vaudeville theaters.[19] Much like Toya-san and her kimono's arrival in America through sea merchants, Japanese culture and art designs were imported through the sea for an American appetite. Likewise, the production studio, Ince thought that employing Japanese subjects and actors would refine and cater to middle-class tastes, especially among middle-class women interested in Japanese Taste.[20]

Toya-san's kimono, introduced via a merchant ship, embodies the fusion of Japanese Taste and Christian values, resonating with the aspirations of middle-class American women amidst the shift towards modernity. From the late 1890s to the early 1910s, Japanese Taste held nostalgic significance as a premodern and primitive counterbalance to encroaching modernity, which posed a threat to Victorian morality.[21] The perceived simplicity of Japanese art mirrored Christian ideals emphasizing sincerity and the pursuit of heaven, qualities embraced by middle-class women in Christian households.[22] This cultural transition integrated Japanese art, embodying both moral and artistic values, as a bridge between urban life and traditional Christian ideals in the evolving landscape of modern industrialized society.

The film employs symbolic visual language to depict the construction of Japanese Taste: facilitating the importation of Toya-

san's Christian-sanctified kimono into American domestic life, emblematic in her marriage to Tom. Interestingly, a parallel fate unfolded in Aoki's real life shortly after filming *The Wrath of the Gods* in 1914, as she married Hayakawa and stopped portraying leading roles.[23] Publicity of Aoki's marriage life demonstrated an intriguing contrast between her visual representation and textual descriptions. Despite numerous articles describing her everyday attire in the latest French or American fashions in words, she was most frequently photographed wearing a kimono.[24]

The focus on Aoki's visual representation in a kimono over descriptions of her Westernized persona unveils the hierarchy within her star image: Aoki's Japanese Taste, portrayed through her collection of kimonos, meticulously maintained Japanese garden, and doll-like appearance with a soft voice, constituted the primary allure for middle-class women. Conversely, her westernized image, crafted to render her non-threatening to American society and align with the nationwide Americanization movement among early twentieth-century middle-class Americans, played a secondary role. Furthermore, Aoki's integration into American society primarily centered on domestic aspects through modern consumer goods and lifestyle. While the production studio Ince's fictionalized biography of Aoki emphasized her conversion to Christianity, Americanized character and Western education background, in line with the Americanization movement, her assimilation did not extend to pursuing a professional career or engaging in public life.[25] In essence, the problem arises when her Westernized image eclipses her Japanese identity. An illustration of this is evident in her role in the film *The Courageous Coward*, where she was promoted as a Japanese woman merely imitating her Western counterparts.[26] This conclusion contrasts with Sara Ross's interpretation of Aoki as an inspiring figure adept at balancing traditional and modern feminine values both on and off screen. A closer examination of the evolving significance of her kimono offers a differing perspective, illustrating how American women perceived Aoki as a sophisticated symbol of imported Japanese material culture.

Toya-san and Aoki collectively epitomize the delicate elements of Japanese Taste, sanctified by Christian faith and imported for Americans to adorn their homes and navigate the complexities of modernity. American middle-class women, by embracing this cultural import, presented an admirable image of families and individuals. In contrast, Hayakawa, performing as Yamaki in *The Wrath of the Gods,* enjoyed more freedom in navigating traditional and modern personas. Hayakawa portrayed an Americanized Japanese immigrant in his pivotal film *The Cheat*. He was never seen in kimonos or sandals on the streets of Hollywood.[27] In fan magazine articles featuring Hayakawa, Aoki was depicted as a compliant wife, and her ability to hold onto Hayakawa was linked to her perceived capability to provide domestic comforts, thus playing a subordinate role in the formation of Hayakawa's stardom.[28] Consequently, Aoki faced a dual form of repression stemming from the kimono: one symbolized the purified, "safe" consumption of Japanese culture by American women, while the other embodied a set of cultural traditions shaping her body and roles in her marriage with Hayakawa, ultimately depriving her of subjectivity as a real woman.

The film, including the character Toya-san, rather than being perceived as aspirational, faced criticism from the Japanese audience for its unattractive portrayal of Japanese people. Despite its release at the Fujikan Theater in Asakusa on September 15, 1918, *The Wrath of the Gods* faced a ban from exhibition after less than a week due to its portrayal of Japanese society in a primitive and disgraceful light.[29] Critical voices, notably from the Pure Film movement in Japan, condemned the film's portrayal of Japanese individuals, considering it aimed to appease foreign tastes, in response, these critics and filmmakers dedicated themselves to producing authentic Japanese films for the international market.[30] Consequently, both Toya-san and Aoki's personhood became distilled into an acceptable form of Japanese Taste, salvaged by American men to rejuvenate the subjectivity of middle-class American women.

The Dragon Painter: The Death and Resurrection of Japanese Taste through Americanized Kimono

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States witnessed the emergence of a culture of authenticity in response to consumerism and industrialization. The historian T. J. Jackson Lears suggests that the urbanized consumer culture left the educated class feeling disconnected from reality.[31] This led them to seek authenticity, exemplified by the adoption of Japanese Taste among middle-class Americans.

Show business capitalized on authenticity through the commercialization of films featuring the other. The emergence of Japanese Taste as a popular discourse owed its empowerment to female consumers, as seen in *The Wrath of The Gods.* Additionally, female creative talents, such as Mary McNeil Fenollosa, author of the novel *The Dragon Painter,* contributed to this rising trend by introducing Japanese Taste through various mediums like novels, art collections, and Hollywood cinema.

Four decades ago, *The Wrath of the Gods* and *The Dragon Painter* garnered acclaim from influential archive institutions in the United States. This acclaim was attributed to their utilization of Japanese casts and narratives sourced directly from Japan, supposedly offering a more genuine portrayal of Japanese life and characters.[32] However, this apparent authenticity masks a deeper issue of latent orientalism.

The film *The Dragon Painter* presented an idealized and romanticized version of Japan, aligning with the familiar imagery American audiences had encountered in the late 19th century. Detailed analysis in Miyao's book reveals that while *The Dragon Painter* was independently produced by Hayakawa's studio, Haworth, the film's primary focus remained the reception by American viewers rather than catering to Japanese audiences' desire for authenticity.[33] Hayakawa faced criticism due to the lukewarm reception of films released around the same time, raising concerns about his appeal to American audiences. Meanwhile, Robertson-Cole, Hayakawa's film distribution partner, gained increasing influence over his productions, reducing Hayakawa's creative autonomy. To revive Hayakawa's popularity, Robertson-Cole strategically promoted *The Dragon Painter* to align with the

American audience's perception of authenticity, employing clichéd symbols like dragons and kimonos in advertisements.[34]

The Dragon Painter was marketed as an authentic depiction, yet its cultural elements largely reflected an Americanized perspective, deviating from accuracy. Scenes depicting Kano Indara's Japanese-style garden were filmed in California, part of the commercial gardens constructed by George Turner Marsh around 1896.[35] Milton Menasco, the film's art director known for his Hollywood posters, likely created the two dragon paintings showcased in scenes introducing Kano Indara.[36] Additionally, the character Umeko, after her wedding, continues to wear a long-sleeved kimono, traditionally not worn by married women, and maintains the shimada hairstyle, typically changed to the less ostentatious marumage.[37] These instances strongly suggest that the film's portrayal of Japanese cultural motifs aligned more with the superficial understanding of American audiences engrossed in the Japanese Taste craze rather than offering an authentic representation.

The character Umeko, portrayed by Aoki, vividly embodies Japanese Taste. Her room is replete with quintessential symbols: featuring tatami mats, fusuma, Japanese sliding doors, and shoji, adorned with folding screens depicting Japanese-style paintings, complemented by vases and paper lanterns. Umeko, adorned in luxurious kimono in initial scenes, blurs the boundary between herself and the ornamental elements that surround her by engaging in activities like painting or arranging hair accessories in front of a Japanese-style table.

This decorativeness of Umeko and her film settings, mirror Cheng's depiction of the iconic Victorian image of the Chinese Lady Afong Moy—an image where racial and sexual attributes are displaced by sartorial splendor. Each object within Afong Moy's environment, from chintz and silk to furniture hinting at mahogany or rosewood, tea, sugar, porcelain, and the Asian woman herself, carries a profound weight of colonial and imperial history.[38] Both cases underscore the documented role of people and objects from Asia, whether real or imagined, in shaping various facets of American modern life.

Umeko's transformation throughout the film mirrors the evolving relationship between the kimono and Japanese art tradition. Her sacrifice embodies the preservation of Japanese culture amidst the challenges of modernity. In *The Wrath of the Gods,* she portrayed an unfortunate woman cursed by a Buddhist god, serving as a surrogate sacrifice for her brother's sin. However, in *The Dragon Painter,* Umeko is not seen as a woman but as the spirit of a lost princess transformed into a dragon. Here, Umeko symbolizes Japan's splendid artistic tradition, existing solely to inspire Tatsu (played by Hayakawa), the prodigious painter, with creative inspiration.

Umeko's father, Kano Indara, a renowned painter in search of a protege and successor to carry on the prestigious lineage of master paintings, lamented the absence of a son to inherit the Indara legacy. Uchida, a friend of Kano Indara, discovers Tatsu's artistic talent and introduces him as a potential disciple to Indara in Tokyo. Since Tatsu would only agree to be Indara's disciple after finding his princess, Umeko, daughter of Kano, becomes the sole means for Kano to perpetuate the family's art tradition. Her marriage to Tatsu is not a romantic union but rather a transactional arrangement.

The pinnacle of the film unfolds as Umeko, adorned in kimono, performs a traditional Japanese dance with a silver fan amidst a Japanese-style floral arrangement, accompanied by a samisen and Japanese drums played by her housemaid. During their initial meeting in this dance scene, Umeko's identity and presence dissolve into a mesmerizing spectacle of Japanese artistic heritage, captivating the screen for over forty seconds without any dialogue. Tatsu's profound fascination and astonishment are evident, as he falls in love not with Umeko as an individual but with the amalgamation of art tradition embodied through her.

In this portrayal, Umeko's essence as a woman is eclipsed, supplanted by the rhythmic harmony of Japanese music, traditional instruments, silver fans, fusuma doors adorned with hand-painted motifs—transforming Umeko into a vessel delivering pure aestheticism to the space. This scene aligns with Tom Gunning's concept of the cinema of attraction, which characterized early Hollywood cinema (1895-1907), and later assimilated into narrative

cinema.[39] It was intended to astonish audiences and pique curiosity, significantly influenced by prevailing ethnographic and scientific discourses about other cultures rather than serving a primary narrative purpose.[40] *The Dragon Painter* projected an imagined Japan familiar to American audiences during a time when exotic cultures were presented through ethnography and travelogues.

Umeko's character, as perceived by Tatsu, transcends her female identity, becoming more emblematic of a vessel than a woman. Tatsu's sorrow over Umeko's disappearance is palpable as he clutches her kimono, as if embracing her body. Scenes portraying the 'dead' Umeko with a disheveled kimono and trailing hair echo traditional Japanese depictions of female ghosts in theater and art.[41] Strikingly, it's only upon seeing Umeko's ghost, not her physical self, that Tatsu commences painting his masterpiece.

In the end, the film leaves uncertainty about Umeko's physical reunion with Tatsu, pondering whether her appearance was a sudden vision or reality. Nonetheless, this uncertainty becomes inconsequential when seeing the story as a whole—an elusive princess metamorphosing into a dragon, fueling Tatsu's artistic inspiration. This princess spirit embodies traditional Japanese cultural heritage, further manifested through Umeko's presence. By the film's conclusion, Tatsu has absorbed the essence of Nihonga painting and showcased it successfully to Western art collectors. Umeko's purpose seems fulfilled, rendering her physicality inconsequential, as it sublimates into the delicate fabric of Japanese Taste, symbolized by the kimono. Consequently, the essence of Japanese culture, seemingly fading, is reborn in American, specifically the Japanese Tea Garden in California. Umeko's body and subjectivity willingly succumbed to three patriarchal influences: her father's lineage, Tatsu's journey towards self-actualization through integrating art tradition, and the aesthetic tradition predominantly shaped by Japanese men.

The narrative is similar to those of Euro-American adventurers, poets, and artists—largely men—who struggled for authenticity in the far East, despite the boundaries of their society. In the 1890s, Japan's art landscape experienced a phase of

modernization with European painters and sculptors imported to civilize and instruct in the ways of modern art.[42] Edward Peil Sr.'s portrayal of Kano Indara epitomizes the Euro-American desire to rescue and protect authentic Japanese art amidst the complexities of modernity. This process of modernity is embodied by Uchida, Kano's friend and a mining engineer, as he surveys Kyushu's remote mountains for coal deposits using European-imported technical drawings in the film.

The on-screen anxiety portrayed in *The Dragon Painter* is intricately connected to off-screen motivations. The novel, authored by Mary Fenollosa, wife of the renowned Japanophile Ernest Fenollosa, encapsulates the Western desire to preserve Japanese culture and integrate into a modernized society.[43] Ernest Fenollosa arrived in Japan at the invitation of Japanese authorities, assuming a teaching role in philosophy at Tokyo University in 1878.[44] Bestowed with the name Kano Eitan (Yeitan) by Kano Eitoku (1814–1891), a prominent figure in the school with ties to the Imperial family, Ernest Fenollosa was once a celebrated figure.[45] However, Ernest's expertise in Japanese art faced professional setbacks due to increasing nationalism. Mary dedicated the book to Kano Eitan, symbolically involving her husband in the resurgence of Japanese painting and asserting her authorial control by using her married name.[46]

The novel *The Dragon Painter* emerged during the era when Japanese Taste gained popularity. As cited in Guth, William Hosley emphasizes the critical involvement and leadership of women, both as consumers and creators of art, in promoting the Japanese style.[47] These female authors, including Mary Fenollosa, addressed a predominantly female readership, using Japan as a focal point to scrutinize and challenge Victorian gender dynamics. Through her work on the novel, Mary Fenollosa not only attained professional recognition but also secured financial independence, marking her as a modern professional woman. However, this transformation came at the expense of Umeko's subjectivity within the narrative. Toya-san's role in *The Wrath of The God* illustrates the purification and fusion of the kimono with Japanese Taste. Umeko embodies the function and consequence of this convergence, epitomizing Japanese Taste as

a tool to navigate modernity for Westerners through an exploration of primitive and authentic art.

Notably, Umeko transitions from object to subject through her interactions with objects. In Tatsu's painting exhibition for Euro-American connoisseurs, Umeko's disappearance by drowning in the water is juxtaposed with the emergence of a mythological female figure—presumably, this represents Umeko's inference from the plot—adorned in a lavish kimono, leading a man, potentially Tatsu. Both figures walk hand in hand in the wild, symbolizing bravery and liberty. This painting technique, pioneered by Kano Hōgai, formed the foundation of Nihonga, an art form blending tradition with modern nationalistic ideals.[48] Interestingly, Nihonga was the style that actress Tsuru Aoki's adoptive father studied before moving to the United States.[49] Born in Tokyo, in 1899, at eleven years old, Aoki traveled to the United States with the Kawakami troupe and became the adopted daughter of Aoki Toshio (Hyosai), an artist in San Francisco.[50] Aoki likely played a creative role in a crucial painting depicting Tatsu's professional success.[51] The significance of this painting suggests Tsuru Aoki's tribute to her adoptive father's passing seven years prior.

Aoki's personal experiences as a Japanese American immigrant surfaced through abstract and synthesized means rather than organic expression, albeit confined within Euro-American connoisseur of Japanese culture in this film. However, considering it as an act of resistance would be overly optimistic. Both American and Japanese audiences remained largely unaware of Aoki's background due to deliberate misinformation circulated by film producer Lasky in magazines promoting *The Wrath of the God*s. In those two examples, both Umeko's subjectivity as a character and Aoki's as an actress are ambiguous. Due to the lack of concrete evidence indicating their direct interventions in the film's narrative, their agency is difficult for the audience to perceive.

Daughter of the Dragon: Dressing for Self-Expression and Subversion of Oriental Beauty

Daughter of the Dragon, produced in the 1930s, emerged during an era characterized by recurring themes of lust and oriental beauty in films focusing on Chinese characters. Hollywood films of that time often portrayed China as an alien civilization, seemingly devoid of inclinations toward democracy, spotlighting corruption, violence, poverty, and prostitution prevalent in modern China.[52] Compared to Aoki's films studied earlier, *Daughter of the Dragon,* was produced and influenced by distinct political discourses, emerging more than a decade later.

Anna May Wong was raised in Los Angeles by second-generation Chinese Americans. Wong entered the film industry as an extra while attending high school.[53] Her breakthrough came with the starring role in *The Toll of the Sea* as Lotus Flower and gained prominence as the first highly visible female Asian American film star during the 1920s.[54]

Wong's films have a dreamy, surreal quality that romanticizes an exotic, alien oriental civilization, distinctly different from Aoki's carefully crafted authenticity aimed at the American audience. *Daughter of the Dragon*, in which Anna May Wong portrayed the character of Ling Moy, draws heavily on ancient symbolism, most notably the dragon. The film further incorporates elements like gunplay, secret panels, and torture chambers, all of which contribute to its portrayal of a culture that, though rooted in antiquity, is depicted as both malevolent and alien to the Western audience. The sense of alien is further reinforced when Ling Moy prayed to ancestors in front of the painting of the dragon, symbolizing the spirit of Chinese tradition. The pair of shining eyes of the dragon echoes the shining costumes of Wong, signifying a mythical lineage between the two. In the United States, a demeaning depiction and fascination with Eastern cultures created opportunities for actors like Wong to take on roles that perpetuated the negative stereotypes associated with the East.[55]

Unlike Aoki, who consistently portrays characters in kimonos across her two films, Anna May Wong's character, Ling Moy, undergoes various wardrobe changes that align with the storyline in *Daughter of the Dragon.* Paramount invested a thousand

dollars—far surpassing the costume budgets of other actors—into Anna May's elaborate Chinese gowns.[56] She adorns Peking opera headdresses and Western-style bare legs in the opening scene. During a love scene with Petrie, Ling Moy's father Fu Manchu's foe, she opts for a Western hairstyle and attire. In a romantic moment with Ah Kee (played by Sessue Hayakawa), the Chinese detective investigating Fu Manchu's case, she insists he wears the robe of the Eastern Rank, while Ling Moy herself dons a coat resembling Pei Zi from the Tang Dynasty—a long scarf with long sleeves over her clothes. She plays the pipa, a Chinese stringed instrument, and softly sings a Taishanese dialect song for him. The use of Chinese music, attires, and surroundings symbolically connects them to China's shared history. Overall, the opulent and glamorous outfits within Ling Moy's lavishly designed house create a surreal atmosphere. Her seamless attire changes throughout the film underscore her intricate and ambiguous identity.

Wong was conscious of how her differences propelled her career. Embracing her public image as an enigmatic, mystical figure suggests she leveraged racist perceptions to some extent to maintain the public's intrigue with her. The early 1930s witnessed a resurgence of Orientalist fashions. Long popular since the late eighteenth century, combinations of Chinese silks and Indian cottons, Turkish gowns, and Arab burnooses, worn by icons like Greta Garbo and Joan Bennett, symbolized luxury, feminine allure, and contemporary style.[57] Reflecting on the Chinese influence in her American attire, Wong noted, "I realize that I look better if my gowns have a suggestion of China about them. And it's good business too!"[58] While Wong was often defined by her race, she skillfully used it as a means of setting herself apart from other actors vying for roles and recognition.

Wong's active use of ethnically specific costumes for character development aligns with Hobsbawm's concept of invented tradition. Hobsbawm delves into the shift from empires to the development of modern nations, highlighting that many perceived old traditions are relatively recent or even newly created.[59] The advent of early cinema occurred amidst a rapidly transforming society,

resulting in the erosion or dismantling of social norms that previously aligned with old traditions. This process led to the emergence of new traditions, for which the old ones were unsuitable, or when these traditions and their custodians proved insufficiently adaptable. The portrayal of Japanese and Chinese cultural motifs in American cinema becomes a canvas where traditions are either revived or newly fashioned.

The fluid, metamorphic image of Ling Moy, revealed Wong, as a Chinese American, evolving and transitioning between tradition and modernity. Somehow, this also resonated with the surreal imagination of Chinese women among the American audience. This portrayal effectively invents a new tradition by blending old cultural elements with modern Western influences. By embracing this gaze, Wong asserted the power to define and shape perception. Wong welcomed this surreal imagination of her ethnicity, partly because, as a second-generation immigrant, she also recognized China through imagination before her first trip to China in 1936. During her European tour on May 11, 1935, Anna May Wong attended a reception at the Chinese Embassy in London, where she met Hu Die, one of China's prominent film actresses.[60] Although no photographs exist of their encounter, Hu Die's oral autobiography provides a vivid description of the event. She recalls, "At the tea party that day... Wong, who was tall and wore a colorful garment with very wide sleeves, topped her outfit with a red and black straw hat. The hat resembled those worn by Qing soldiers, and the entire outfit was so distinct that it has remained etched in my memory."[61] This initial impression, with particular emphasis on Wong's exotic attire, alludes to the uniqueness of her style, which contrasted sharply with the fashion of Chinese women at the time. Specifically, the reference to the Qing military hat evokes an image of cultural otherness, suggesting that Wong's appearance might have embodied a deliberate attempt to blur cultural lines. Therefore, Wong's understanding and portrayal of Chinese clothing might have been imagined. Nonetheless, Wong's time in Europe played a significant role in cultivating a newfound self-confidence, enabling her to pursue more substantial roles beyond the stereotypical "exotic" side characters that

Hollywood often relegated her to. Throughout her career, Anna May Wong visited Europe multiple times, with her first trip occurring in 1928. She returned to the continent several times in the 1930s. During her 1928 stay in London, Wong notably rejected an offer from Hollywood screenwriter and talent agent Ben Hirschfield to star in *Piccadilly*, a major English production.[62] Wong explained that *Piccadilly* was "the most lavish production ever attempted here in English. I have a wonderful part, one of the three featured roles," signaling her growing independence and desire for more meaningful roles.[63] In an interview with a French reporter for *Pour Vous*, Wong explained her affection for Europe, noting that "the people there had less contempt for the colored races,"[64] allowing her to be her authentic self. She further shared stories from her childhood and spoke fondly of her family back home. Upon her return to Hollywood, Wong became increasingly vocal about her dissatisfaction with the limited and often stereotypical portrayals of Asians and Asian Americans in Hollywood cinema.[65]

Wong's visit to China in 1936 allowed her to deepen her understanding of Chinese cultural heritage while also embracing her identity as a Chinese American woman. It was during this visit that Wong first traveled to Shanghai, where she later met with Hu Die. A photograph (Figure 1) from the Association of Chinese Americans for Social Justice illustrates Wong wearing a cheongsam in a style reminiscent of Hu Die's, highlighting the evolution of her sartorial choices. The significance of this outfit—a Cantonese-style cheongsam—lies in its cultural symbolism.[66] The cheongsam symbolized a shift toward female emancipation in China, especially from the late 1920s onwards, as it provided women with greater freedom by eliminating the restrictive layers of traditional clothing.[67] Wong's adoption of the cheongsam marked a significant shift in her personal style, signaling her growing identification with Chinese heritage. This contrasted with her earlier career, during which she frequently embraced the flapper look, highlighting her modern and liberated aesthetic as part of her public persona in the 1920s and 1930s.[68] However, the challenges throughout her visit crushed her hopes of reconnecting with her culture and people. Wong became

painfully aware of the fact that she was "a woman without a country" and seen as a "foreign girl in a Chinese dress".[69] She had difficulties communicating due to the differences in Chinese dialect, forcing her to employ an interpreter, and was constantly criticized by the government throughout her stay. In both America and China, she was regarded as a foreigner, and yet she finds strength from this painful, problematic postion to form a Chinese American identity.

Figure 1. A group photo of Anna May Wong and Hu Die, a famous Chinese female movie star.

After her 1936 trip to China, Wong began to cultivate a more distinctly Chinese persona, both on-screen and in the media. This transformation was most apparent in her nearly exclusive choice to wear custom-made cheongsams. In the short film *Hollywood Party*, a 20-minute production set at a Chinese-themed tea party in Southern California, the film featured musical performances and a fashion show attended by Hollywood celebrities.[70] Through this fashion show, Wong showcased three distinct qipaos she had brought back from her trip to China, while also demonstrating her linguistic fluency

by speaking Mandarin to her Asian assistant. By this time, Wong's proficiency in multiple languages was well-known, as she had performed in English, French, and German, and had also used Cantonese in early talkies.[71] Through her strategic use of Mandarin and her choice of the qipao, Wong embodied a new sense of Chinese American modernity.

Wong's efforts can be seen as a challenge to Cheng's analysis in Ornamentalism, particularly in her examination of Wong's performance in *Piccadilly*. Cheng highlights how, in a dancing scene, Wong's subjectivity seems to extend to an animated object, blurring the boundaries between herself and the object, thus freeing her from the audience's gaze.[72] However, Cheng's analysis doesn't delve into the perspective of the onlookers or their power positions, nor does it adequately consider Wong's autonomy and agency in shaping her on-screen image.

Despite being often ignored or misunderstood, Wong actively sought to find her voice and advocate for ethnic minorities stuck between cultures in America. She utilized her voice off-screen to deconstruct her on-screen image. According to Peng, in her initial sound film made in Hollywood, her pronounced British accent, unlike her attire, sought to reveal rather than hide the divisions between visual and auditory elements.[73] Wong's portrayal in a surreal, fantastical space provided by American audiences allowed her to reveal the complexity of her identity, even challenging American stereotypes.

Having spent several years in Europe, Wong likely felt more secure in her mixed identity and used her attire to make nuanced cultural statements, subtly challenging both American and Chinese perceptions. This approach allowed Wong to establish an impeccable and widely recognized sense of style, enabling her to pay homage to her spiritual homeland later on. During her European tour from December 1934 to early 1935, Wong sang about the experience of being a half-caste woman on theater stages, expressing her racial loneliness. She tailored her songs for each country, aiming to resonate with and bridge understanding with audiences regarding her in-between position.[74] Upon her return from Europe, Wong vocally

expressed discontent with the representation of Asians and Asian Americans in Hollywood. She criticized the portrayal of Chinese people as villainous, treacherous, or a snake in the grass.[75]

Wong's active advocacy for Chinese clothing and her push for greater visibility of Asian performers in Hollywood underlines her connection of racial identity with fashion. Her proactive engagement reflects a continual process of shaping a fluid and intricate identity by infusing fresh meanings into Chinese symbols, drawing from both American and Chinese influences. While it might appear that she's playing into the stereotypical fantasy of ancient China, Wong consistently introduces her unique perspective to captivate the audience, whether or not they consciously notice it. This uniqueness is more pronounced than Aoki's painting in *The Dragon Painter*. Through this approach, she invents a new tradition that belongs to the Chinese American narrative. Her actions demonstrate her unceasing endeavor to navigate her identity across cultures. Wong's appropriation of misrepresented cultural symbols from America and potentially misunderstood Chinese fashion contributes to the crafting of her distinctive identity. This uniqueness might have perplexed audiences from both countries, showcasing Wong's ambiguous position amidst diverse cultures, but it's precisely this ambiguity that makes her intriguing and appealing.

Conclusion

Aoki refrained from discussing politics in her public life, choosing instead to share life wisdom and showcase her lifestyle. Her consumption patterns often reflected either Japanese taste or an Americanized lifestyle, aligning with the dominant political discourse of the time in America. Conversely, Wong actively shaped her identity by consciously consuming Chinese goods and purposefully wearing culturally specific attire. When analyzing their star images, it's easy to overlook that both Aoki and Wong, despite being ethnic minorities, were integral parts of the female consumer base in the United States, exerting influence in shaping vernacular modern culture.

In an era characterized by modernization and industrialization, women found empowerment in defining themselves through consumption, leading to the emergence of an entire industry catering to their interests. American female audiences and consumers significantly influenced the portrayal of Asian women on screen, actively seeking their modern identities through these representations. Despite fulfilling the imagination of the American audience, both Aoki and Wong displayed varying degrees of resistance on screen, revealing the subjectivity and complexity of their Asian identities. This exchange of desires and needs circulated among women of various ethnicities, fostering mutual influence. Both American and Asian women utilized history and the past to construct and shape their images. They engaged in an ongoing process of invention and reinvention, aligning themselves with the evolving spirit of the times.

Notes

[1] Anne Anlin Cheng, *Ornamentalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[2] Reginald Barker, dir., *The Wrath of the Gods* (Mutual Film, 1914), 57 min., https://search-alexanderstreet-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C3373536.

[3] William Worthington, dir., *The Dragon Painter* (1919; New Yorker Video, 2008), 53 min., DVD, 720p.

[4] Lloyd Corrigan, dir., *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931; KL Studio Classics, 2023), 1 hr., 12 min., Blu-ray Disc, 1080p HD.

[5] Rey Chow, "Seeing Modern China Toward a Theory of Ethnic Spectatorship," in *The Rey Chow Reader*, ed. Paul Bowman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 92–122.

[6] Catherine Russell, "New Women of the Silent Screen: China, Japan, Hollywood," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 20, no. 3 (2005): 1–13, doi:10.1215/02705346-20-3_60-1.

[7] Daisuke, Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

[8] Sara Ross, "The Americanization of Tsuru Aoki: Orientalism, Melodrama, Star Image, and the New Woman," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 20, no. 3 (2005): 129–58, doi:10.1215/02705346-20-3_60-129.

[9] Christine M. Guth, "From Book to Film," *Journal of Japonisme* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1–26, doi:10.1163/24054992-06010001.

[10] April G. Wei and S. Louisa Wei, "Anna May Wong," *Oxford Bibliographies Online Datasets*, accessed December 6, 2023, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/abstract/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0272.xml.

[11] Xin Peng, "Anna May Wong and Sessue Hayakawa: Racial Performance, Ornamentalism, and Yellow Voices in Daughter of the Dragon (1931)," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 37, no. 2 (2022): 1–29, doi:10.1215/02705346-9786986.

[12] Graham Russell Hodges, "Four Atlantic Crossings," in *Anna May Wong: From Laundryman's Daughter to Hollywood Legend*, 2d ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012).

[13] Josef Von Sternberg, dir., *Shanghai Express* (1932; Universal Mod, 2014), 1 hr., 22 min., DVD, 720p.

[14] Katie Gee Salisbury, *Not Your China Doll: The Wild and Shimmering Life of Anna May Wong* (Dutton, 2024), https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat03710a&AN=alb.10451041&site=eds-live&scope=site.

[15] Sean Metzger, "Patterns of Resistance?: Anna May Wong and the Fabrication of China in American Cinema of the Late 30s," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 23, no. 1 (2006): 1–11, doi:10.1080/10509200490476643.

[16] Cheng, *Ornamentalism, 22.*

[17] Chow, *The Rey Chow Reader*, 113.

[18] Metzger, "Patterns of Resistance?: Anna May Wong and the Fabrication of China in American Cinema of the Late 30s," 9-10.

[19] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*. chap.1.

[20] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap.2.

[21] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*. chap.1.

[22] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap.1.

[23] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap.10.

[24] Ross, "The Americanization of Tsuru Aoki: Orientalism, Melodrama, Star Image, and the New Woman," *144.*

[25] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap.3.

[26] Ross, "The Americanization of Tsuru Aoki: Orientalism, Melodrama, Star Image, and the New Woman," *149.*

[27] Ross, "The Americanization of Tsuru Aoki: Orientalism, Melodrama, Star Image, and the New Woman," *142.*

[28] Ross, "The Americanization of Tsuru Aoki: Orientalism, Melodrama, Star Image, and the New Woman," *141.*

[29] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap.14.

[30] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap.14.

[31] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap. 2.

[32] Richard A. Oehling, "Hollywood and The Image of The Oriental, 1910-1950- Part II," *Film & History* 8, no. 3 (September 1978): 41-48, doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/flm.1978.a487531.

[33] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap. 12.

[34] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap. 12.

[35] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 19.

[36] Guth,“From Book to Film”, 21.

[37] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap. 12.

[38] Cheng, *Ornamentalism,* 22.

[39] Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” *Early Cinema*, 1990, 56–62, doi:10.5040/9781838710170.0008.

[40] Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” 64.

[41] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 23.

[42] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 8.

[43] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 4.

[44] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 7.

[45] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 9.

[46] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 9.

[47] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 6.

[48] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 24.

[49] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 25.

[50] Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom.* chap. 1.

[51] Guth, “From Book to Film”, 24.

[52] Oehling, "Hollywood and The Image of The Oriental, 1910-1950- Part II," 42.

[53] Sarah Kazuko Chow, "Anna May Wong: Navigating Asian American Racial Identity in Early Hollywood," *Film Matters* 11, no. 1 (2020): 50–61, doi:10.1386/fm_00046_1, 1.

[54] Chow, "Anna May Wong: Navigating Asian American Racial Identity in Early Hollywood," 1.

[55] Chow, "Anna May Wong: Navigating Asian American Racial Identity in Early Hollywood," 52.

[56] Hodges, "Four Atlantic Crossings," 101.

[57] Hodges, "Four Atlantic Crossings," 104.

[58] Chow, "Anna May Wong: Navigating Asian American Racial Identity in Early Hollywood," 54.

[59] Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 14.

[60] Hodges, "Four Atlantic Crossings," 134.

[61] Hu Die. *Hu Die Kou Shu Zi Zhuan*胡蝶口述自传, ed by Huiqin Liu. 1st version. (Beijing: Zuo jia chu ban she, 2022), 157.

[62] Salisbury, *Not Your China Doll,*126.

[63] Salisbury,*Not Your China Doll,* 127.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Chow,"Anna May Wong: Navigating Asian American Racial Identity in Early Hollywood," 52.

[66] *"Archive,"* Association of Chinese Americans for Social Justice, accessed February 5, 2025, https://usdandelion.com/archives/7428.

[67] Metzger, "Patterns of Resistance?: Anna May Wong and the Fabrication of China in American Cinema of the Late 30s," 2.

[68] More details about Anna May Wong's flapper image can be found in the Prologue of Katie Gee Salisbury's book, *Not Your China Doll: The Wild and Shimmering Life of Anna May Wong* (Dutton, 2024).

[69] Chow,"Anna May Wong: Navigating Asian American Racial Identity in Early Hollywood," 53.

[70] Metzger, "Patterns of Resistance?: Anna May Wong and the Fabrication of China in American Cinema of the Late 30s," 1.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Cheng, *Ornamentalism,* 78.

[73] Xin Peng, "Anna May Wong and Sessue Hayakawa: Racial Performance, Ornamentalism, and Yellow Voices in Daughter of the Dragon (1931)," 4.

[74] Hodges, "Four Atlantic Crossings," 133.

[75] Hodges, "Four Atlantic Crossings," 100.

Bibliography

Association of Chinese Americans for Social Justice. *"Archive."* Accessed February 5, 2025. https://usdandelion.com/archives/7428.

Barker, Reginald. *The Wrath of the Gods*. Online Video. *Mutual Film*. Mutual Film, 1914. https://search-alexanderstreet-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C3373536.

Cheng, Anne Anlin. *Ornamentalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Chow, Rey. "Seeing Modern China toward a Theory of Ethnic Spectatorship." In *The Rey Chow Reader*, edited by Paul Bowman, 92–122. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Chow, Sarah Kazuko. "Anna May Wong: Navigating Asian American Racial Identity in Early Hollywood." *Film Matters* 11, no. 1 (2020): 50–61. https://doi.org/10.1386/fm_00046_1..

Corrigan, Lloyd, and director. *Daughter of the Dragon*. Blu-ray Disc, 1080p HD. KL Studio Classics, 1931.

Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attractions Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." *Early Cinema*, 1990, 56–62. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781838710170.0008..

Guth, Christine M. "From Book to Film." *Journal of Japonisme* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1163/24054992-06010001..

Hobsbawm, Eric J. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *the Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Hu, Die. *Hu Die Kou Shu Zi Zhuan*. Edited by Huiqin Liu. Di 1 ban. 胡蝶口述自传 / 胡蝶 口述 ; 刘慧琴 整理. Zuo jia chu ban she, 2022. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat03710a&AN=alb.10473678&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Hodges, Graham Russell. "Four Atlantic Crossings." In *Anna May Wong: From Laundryman's Daughter to Hollywood Legend*, 2d ed., 100–140. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012.

Metzger, Sean. "Patterns of Resistance?: Anna May Wong and the Fabrication of China in American Cinema of the Late 30s." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 23, no. 1 (2006): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/10509200490476643..

Miyao, Daisuke. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Oehling, Richard A. "Hollywood and the Image of the Oriental, 1910-1950- Part II." *Film & History* 8, no. 3 (September 1978): 41–48. https://doi.org/10.1353/flm.1978.a487531.

Peng, Xin. "Anna May Wong and Sessue Hayakawa: Racial Performance, Ornamentalism, and Yellow Voices in Daughter of the Dragon (1931." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 37, no. 2 (2022): 1–29. https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-9786986..

Ross, Sara. "The Americanization of Tsuru Aoki: Orientalism, Melodrama, Star Image, and the New Woman." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 20, no. 3 (2005): 129–58. https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-20-3_60-129..

Russell, Catherine. "New Women of the Silent Screen: China, Japan, Hollywood." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 20, no. 3 (2005): 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-20-3_60-1..

Sternberg. *Shanghai Express*. DVD, 720p. *Shanghai Express*. Universal Mod, 1932.

Salisbury, Katie Gee. *Not Your China Doll. [Electronic Resource] : The Wild and Shimmering Life of Anna May Wong*. Dutton, 2024. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat03710a&AN=alb.10451041&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Wei, April G, and S.Louisa Wei. "Anna May Wong." Oxford Bibliographies Online Datasets, 2022. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0272.xml.

Worthington, William, and director. *The Dragon Painter*. DVD, 720p. *New Yorker Video*. Vol. 53 min, DVD. New Yorker Video, 1919.